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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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# **ALLEGED MOUNTAIN PRESERVE ARSONIST INDICTED**

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA** -- Paul K. Charlton, United States Attorney for the District of Arizona, Guadalupe Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, FBI, Skip Rimsza, Phoenix City Mayor, Harold Hurtt, Phoenix Police Chief and Alan Brunacini, Chief of the Phoenix Fire Department, announced today that a federal grand jury at Phoenix, Arizona, returned a 22 count indictment against Mark Warren Sands, DOB 6/20/51, 9046 N. 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, Az, who has been arrested. His initial appearance is expected to occur today, followed by a detention hearing to be scheduled by the Court.

The indictment alleges that Sands set 8 fires at homes under construction on 7 properties near mountain preserve lands in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

Each Section 1951 Extortion charge carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years and a \$250,000 fine.

The charge of using fire to commit the extortion, Section 844(h)(1) carries a mandatory minimum 10 year sentence consecutive to the sentence imposed for the underlying federal felony. In the case of a second or subsequent conviction for Section 844(h)(1), the person is subject to an additional 20 year consecutive sentence. As with the other felonies, it carries a fine of \$250,000 per charge.

(MORE)

The Arson charge, Section 844(i) carries a minimum 5 year sentence and maximum 20 year sentence for each count, and a \$250,000 dollar fine.

Restitution to the victims is also mandatory under Federal law.

The maximum sentence on the extortion counts is 140 years, plus 160 years on the arson counts, for a total of 300 years. If convicted on all the counts of using fire to commit the extortion, Sands also faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 130 years in prison. The maximum fines of \$250,000 for 22 counts totals \$5,500,000 in fines.

The properties and dates of fires which are the subject of the indictment are located at:

8921 N. Arroya Grande Drive, Phoenix, Arizona, 4/9/2000 and 10/1/2000.

9050 N. 40<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 10/20/2000.

2244 E. Vogel Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 12/10/2000.

8530 N. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 12/14/2000.

8516 N. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 12/14/2000.

15442 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 12/20/2000.

12910 E. Corrine Drive, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1/18/01.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force including the Phoenix Police Department and the Phoenix Fire Department, with assistance from the Scottsdale Police Department and the Rural Metro Fire Department.

The prosecution is being handled by Joe Welty and Tom Hannis, Assistant United States Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-01-533-PHX

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